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BRUSH AND PENCIL

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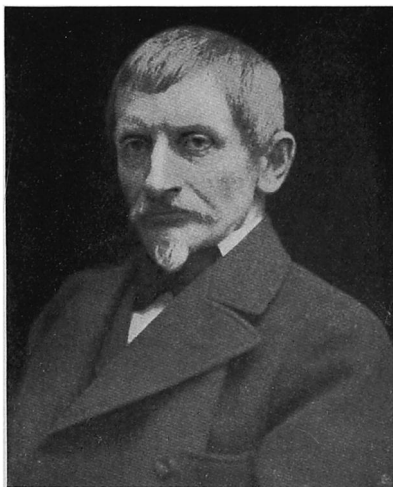
APRIL, 1904

No. 1

STEPHAN SINDING, SCULPTOR

Not since the days of the great Dane Bertel Thorwaldsen has any Northern sculptor acquired such fame beyond the limits of his native land as has Stephan Sinding. The development of Scandinavian plastic art which lies between these two names has gone on in secret. Only the two extremities of this significant progress, which stretches over the nineteenth century, from beginning to end, have claimed the attention of the European art world. As Thorwaldsen reflected the spirit and the attitude of the year 1800, so does the spirit of the present seek expression in the creations of Sinding. Thus the fundamental differences between the two epochs are strikingly revealed in these two.

The age of all-embracing humanity found the model and the goal of the art of all peoples in the ideals of the antique world, and Thorwaldsen's work became the purest embodiment of this principle, while the period of individualism of the present day, despite the ever-broadening sense of international relationship, has even in sculpture forced national peculiarities prominently into the foreground. At the side of Rodin, whose chisel is guided by the Gallic love of sensuous beauty; of the Belgian Meunier, in whose art, as in his nation, Germanic and Roman elements are merged; and of Adolf Hildebrand and Max Klinger, in whom the German passion for fixed form and the equally German yearning to pour out the deepest emotions of the heart strive for expression—at the side of these now stands Stephan Sinding as the interpreter of the true Northern spirit. To him, indeed, as to the other modern masters just mentioned,



STEPHAN SINDING
From a Photograph



PLAQUE
By Stephan Sinding

antiquity was a teacher; but the teacher, not of a rigid classicism, seeking merely to reveal to its disciples the beaten path they have to travel, but of the spirit of the present, profiting by the wealth and dignity of antique forms, while at the same time inculcating also that proud self-confidence with which the Greek knew so well how to inform the art of his own little world.

Thus the impressions and inspiration which Sinding absorbed during his long Roman sojourn were used to perfect and

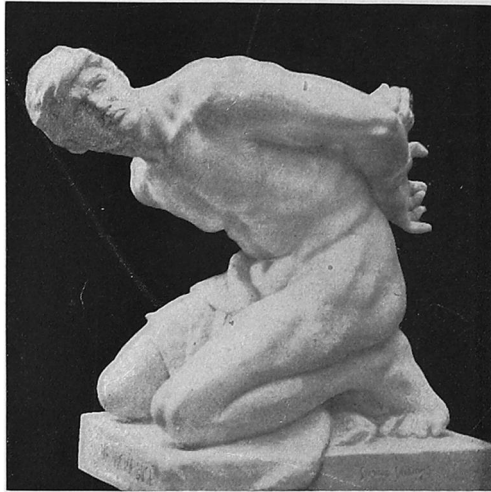
intensify his own artistic message. While still in Rome he finished the first of his masterpieces, "The Barbarian Mother" dragging the lifeless body of her son out of the turmoil of the fight, and at once revealed his artistic personality. Just because this group approaches so closely to various products of antiquity does Sinding's totally different treatment become doubly clear. It is a Northern ballad style which is here in evidence—a style full of stern, elemental power. The brilliant handling of the sculptural problems becomes wonderfully spiritualized, and an epic of heroic proportions lies in these beautiful figures.

It is this that characterizes all of Sinding's works since the first—the complete union of a ripe and finished execution with sensibilities which sound the deeps of the soul's life. The sculptor's art is still the vehicle, but it conveys a meaning intensified by that remarkable, almost indefinable, quality peculiar to Teutonic art, of subjugating the art to the idea. In the group of the "Barbarian Mother" we admire the treatment of the bodies, the close yet simple fidelity to nature, the harmony of lines, the striking contrast between the living body, its muscles tense with powerful effort, and the corpse, which, with its "loosed sinews," may now obey only the final law of gravitation; we note the attitudes of the two forms, accentuated and made more impressive by the carefully and cleverly executed contrasts—but more than all this, we feel the tragedy of motherhood which is here enacted; we see something of the Unknowable, the Inscrutable, and we realize that this is the ultimate goal of artistic expression.

It was probably to his advantage that Sinding began his artistic work comparatively late in life, entering upon his career in a riper mood and with a surer footing than most of his colleagues. Born August 4, 1846, the son of a high Norwegian official at Drontheim, he, too, was destined for the public service. He studied law at Christiania, and had already overcome the terrors of the faculty examinations when, in 1870, at the age of twenty-four, he found himself unable longer to resist the impulse toward artistic occupation. In the summer of 1871 he went to Berlin, receiving his first systematic instruction in the studio of the Rauchian disciple, Albert Wolff. Here was laid the solid foundation of technical proficiency upon which his future productions were to rise. But artistically the Rauchian school seems to have made but little impression upon the young Norwegian. Stronger far was the influence exerted upon him by the vivacious and many-hued art-life of Paris, whither he went to continue his studies, an influence not beneficial, and still plainly noticeable even to-day.

The years from 1877 to 1883 Sinding spent in Rome, where he concluded his apprenticeship, and the shrewd observation of Anselm Feuerbach, "Rome shows every one his place," was proven also in his case. For when, twenty years ago, the artist turned his back upon the Eternal City and settled in Copenhagen, where Thorwaldsen had lived and worked before him, and which has become his second home, he had, as we have seen, found his place and his style.

With the exception of the "Barbarian Mother," the entire series of Sinding's works was produced in Copenhagen. They all bear the impress of the North, which becomes ever clearer and more sharply defined. The keynote of them all lies in the deep sense of the sacredness of nature, and of the beauty of her noblest handiwork, the human form. Sinding's creations gaze at us



THE SLAVE
By Stephan Sinding

with wide, earnest eyes. Here is no unseemly posturing, no frivolity or empty phrase. All appears as though born out of the very soul of one whose vision, turned away from the monotony and the littleness of the workaday world, is fixed upon the ultimate questions of the universe, and who is imbued with all the fervor of a zealous priest. These groups and figures call to mind the words of the hapless Stauffer, when he turned his restless talent to sculpture: "I verily believe that in practicing the plastic art one must be moved by the spirit of the Lord God upon the sixth day."

A monumental calm, a tremendous silence, enfolds the works of Sinding. The thought which gives them life is not trumpeted forth in the market-place; it is too pure and too deeply felt ever to work its own desecration by vulgar parading. These figures do not prattle of the message they bear, but softly and gently they suffer it to enter the soul of the beholder. For all of the spiritual in nature and man, all of yearning and sorrow that strives for utterance in these masterpieces, the artist seeks to reveal in the simple language of form and line, in the skillful manipulation of smooth surfaces of marble.

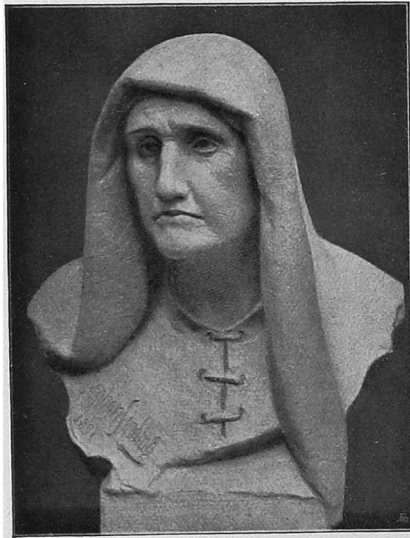
And even in the presentation of the physical body his art never

descends from its proud heights. Sinding's nudes seem invested with a chasteness all their own. They leave no thought or suggestion of the model which served to produce them; the sensual attractions of mere nakedness are strangely spiritualized and transformed almost to the point of actual repulsion. Even in his magnificent group "A Man and a Woman," in which he deals with the theme of human love, this quality is evident. Involuntarily one compares this work with Rodin's "Kiss,"



DIE WALKÜRE
By Stephan Sinding

treating the same subject in so radically different a manner, Rodin's conception picturing, with consummate art, the uttermost of sensual abandon and erotic passion, Sinding's presentation telling but of a pure, wholesome, and sane pleasure. The name "A Man and a Woman" (literally, "Two Human Beings") would have been far better suited to Rodin's group, for the Norwegian has raised his figures out of the world of chance and of human passions, and has given to them the significance of an elemental principle. This pair is no longer merely one of thousands, but the representative of all human nature, and its embrace becomes the symbol

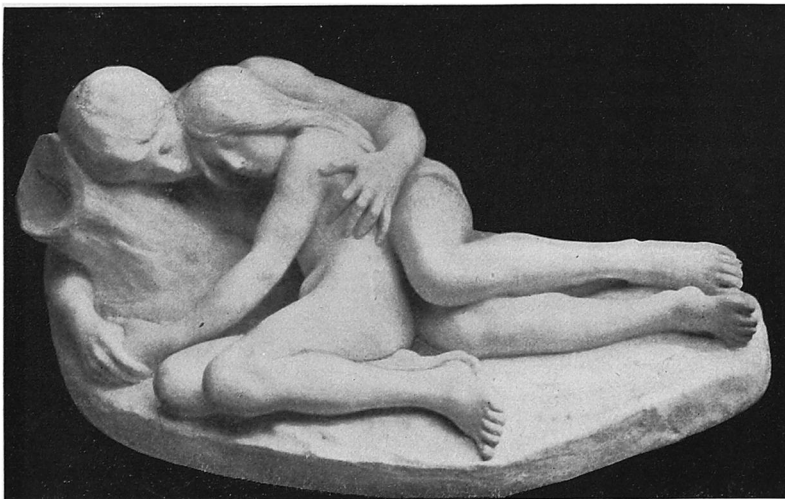


AN OLD WOMAN
By Stephan Sinding

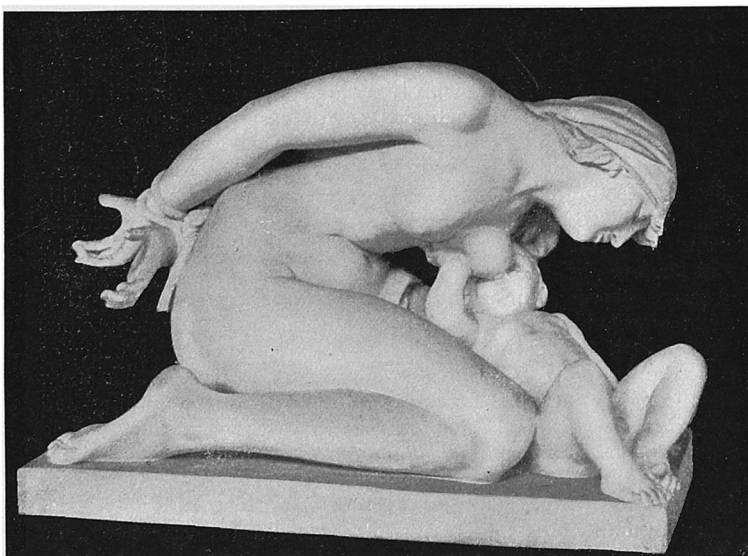
of that impulse which, throughout all time, has drawn the children of men together. Few have given it such expression as has Sinding.

The same virginal purity characterizes the other group which Sinding has dedicated to the same theme. The man is pictured kneeling before the idol of his heart, whose tender knees he is reverently kissing. Wonderfully has the sculptor's art wrought in this composition, replete with great technical difficulties in the treatment of line and form, in the contrasting of the two bodies, and in the structural harmony of the whole.

The same subject returns once more in the large group, "Mother Earth," in whose lap a human pair is slumbering, still unconscious of its powers and its destinies. But here, as perhaps in no other of his works, the thought to be conveyed appears to have thrust itself between the master and his task. It seems as though Sinding had been moved rather by an idea than by an artistic conception, and so it happens that, despite many points of excellence, there remains much that is faulty, such, for instance, as the persistent repetition of horizontal lines in the gigantic limbs of the primal mother and in the smaller human bodies. To this must be laid the uncomfortable feeling that what of symbolism this group contains has been brought in from without rather than rising spontaneously as part of the organic whole. But the conception of maternal dignity, so splen-



NIGHT
By Stephan Sinding



MOTHER IN BONDAGE
By Stephan Sinding

didly presented in the "Barbarian Mother," led the artist again to triumph in the "Captive Mother" suckling her child, in which the passionate utterance of the soul has been given fullest value in the face of immense and vexing technical problems of crowding and tangled horizontal lines.

Beside these wonderful groups stand Sinding's single pieces. The crouching figure of the shackled slave dates back to the artist's early days. In conception and execution it clearly suggests classic and late Renaissance influences, and is not entirely free from conventionalism. Yet this is unquestionably a work of genius and of exceptional power, and is technically interesting for its *finé* presentment of the muscular play of an athletic body.

More striking is the effect of the head of the "Old Woman," the history of the production of which throws an interesting light on the artist's methods. We are told that the suggestion was received from an aged inmate of the almshouse, whom the artist frequently encountered on the streets. But it is easy to see how under his hands the beggar woman was transformed into the personification of suffering womanhood, the old *motif* of the mother, portrayed from a new viewpoint.

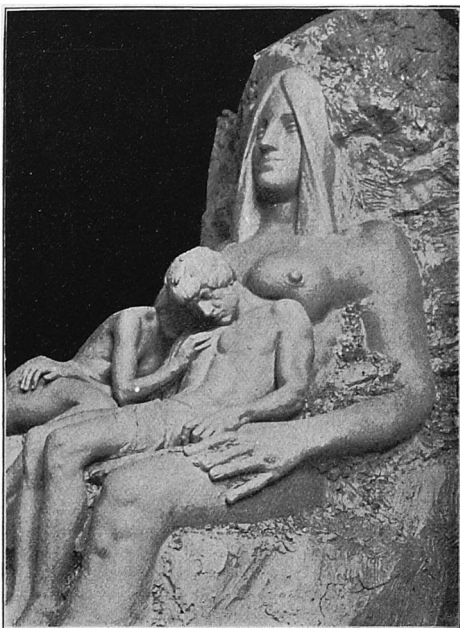
And once again the subject returns in "The Eldest of her Tribe," a work of sublime grandeur, in which the almost unsurpassable realism of the figure is blended with an idealization which raises it out of the sphere of the commonplace to the ethereal heights of a mythological conception; in which the rigid sternness of the figure, the gaunt, bony hands, with their story of a lifetime of suffering, the mute



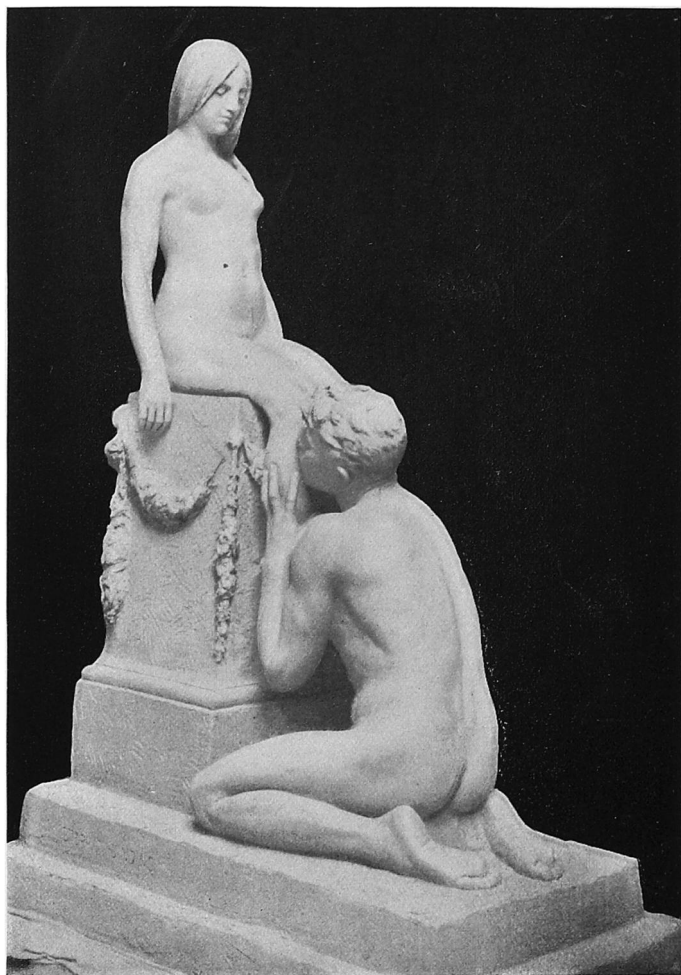
THE OLDEST OF HER TRIBE
By Stephan Sinding

eloquence of the awe-inspiring face, all unite to produce an ineradicable effect. This is, perhaps, Sinding's masterpiece hitherto, and it was scarcely an accident that he should have chosen for this, as for another work, the splendid and dashing figure of the Valkyr, the old traditional Norse art of the wood-carver, an art which he revives with masterly skill. The spirit of this ancient craft binds him still closer to his native soil, whence the inspiration of his life-work has so clearly sprung. The old ballads resound again; they have taken on visible form, and are wafting invisible chords across the ages to bind together the elemental passions of the primeval time and the yearnings and strivings of the present.

MAX OSBORN.



MOTHER EARTH
By Stephan Sinding



PRAYER
By Stephan Sinding

✿ David Watson Stevenson, the sculptor, died at Edinburgh, Scotland, recently. He was born at Ratho, Midlothian, Scotland, March 25, 1842, and began his art career in 1857 under William Brodie. Among his many productions are bronze groups representing "Labor and Learning," forming parts of the Scottish National Prince Consort Memorial; the Platt Memorial at Oldham, and public statues in



TWO HUMAN BEINGS
By Stephan Sinding

several cities, including Baltimore. He also executed life-size statues of Robert Burns for Leith and of Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevenson was a member of the volunteers for twenty-five years, and retired with the rank of honorable major.

✿ The Belgian government has voted funds to help the leading painters and sculptors of Belgium who wish to send over their work to the St. Louis Exposition. A selection has already been made among the masterpieces and pictures, and sculptures are ready to be shipped to the world's fair, where several rooms have been granted to the Belgian section of fine arts.

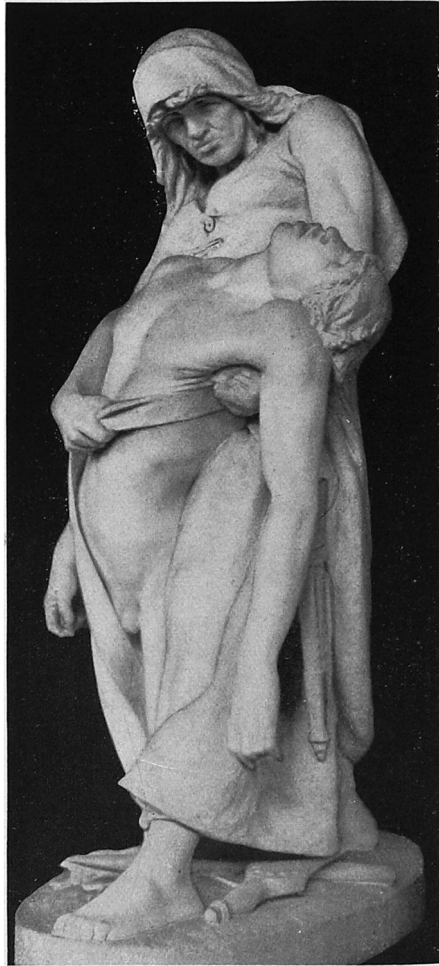
✿ Achille Sirouy, whose death was recently announced, was born at Beauvais in 1834, and was one of the most prolific lithographic artists

of his time. He has interpreted Rousseau, Jalabert, Harmon, Troyon, Mulready, Gérôme, Isabey, Ed Frere, and many others among the modern artists, and Ribera, Murillo, and Correggio, among the ancients, as well as Descamps, Dubufe, Delacroix, and Prud'hon. His honors as a lithographer date back to 1859, when he received a medal at the salon. At the salons of 1900 and 1902 he was strongly represented; at that of the later date his original lithograph of "La Fortune" was purchased by the state.

✱ The Beni-Hasan excavations committee has offered to a number of museums a set of ancient Egyptian pottery, typical work of the Eleventh Dynasty, dating about 2300 B.C. The gifts are allotted to public museums, by which is understood museums of towns and institutions which are open free of charge to the public.

✱ A Ruskin exhibition was recently held at the Manchester, England, City Art Gallery. It included pictures and other works of art illustrating the life and work of Ruskin, as well as letters and manuscripts. The exhibition was being organized by W. G. Collingwood.

✱ Heinrich Vogel, a well-known German portrait-painter, has given his property, worth \$250,000, for the establishment of a charitable institution for artists.



THE BARBARIAN MOTHER
By Stephan Sinding